THE BORROWED SISTER

FRANCE LEGGETT

Photographed especially for this paper at the residence of Mrs. Francis H. Leggett.

UPON the impressions made on the vacant and receptive brains of children depends the fate of nations. The habits, ideals, the superstitions, the tastes of the child of to-day are the characteristics of the man to-morrow.

Can the deficiencies of heredity be supplied by environment?

Are the child's ideals, its mission, its very future, born with it? Will it, in spite of molding, develop along the lines of its natural bent?

These and a thousand more are the questions Mrs. Francis H. Leggett proposes that her experiment shall answer.

Selfishness, conceit, thoughtlessness, egotism—these are the vices Mrs. Leggett dreads as ruinous.

The method she has developed for their suppression, the experiment she conducts for the equalization of two foreign child natures, is worthy of most serious consideration by parents as well as scientists.

The opinions expressed in these pages by authorities competent to judge demonstrate their enthusiasm in the possibilities of this future molding.

Mothers cannot consider too seriously the influences that surround the child at the age of impression.

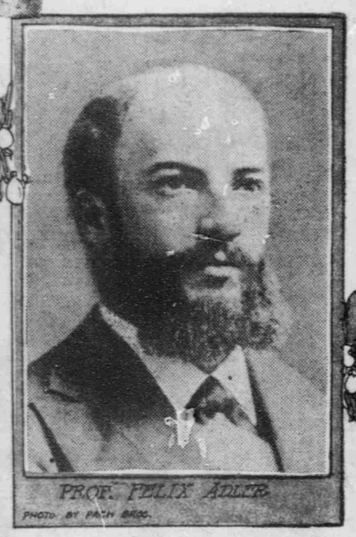
Perhaps—who knows—the solution of all our vexatious moral questions lies in Mrs. Leggett's experiment.

LIVING in the beautiful home of Francis H. Leggett, at 269 Madison avenue, New York, is a blue-eyed, flaxen-haired little girl of a very-much-alive disposition. To the servants of the house she is and always has been "Miss Leggett"; to her other friends she is France. Within the confines of this kingdom of love and refinement, crowned by the experience of seven fairy years, this little princess holds tender but absolute sway.

The mother, Mrs. Leggett, is a woman whose social triumphs, won by her tact, cleverness, wealth and beauty, have not taken up so much of her life that she has not found time to think wisely and act promptly for the training and education of her little daughter.

To the busy woman of modern life the problem of a child growing up in her home presents difficulties that seem serious indeed. Many persons leave them unsolved, and the child comes to manhood or womanhood untrained if not unloved.

If it is an only child, the training is the more difficult, especially in a home where the little autocrat is too greatly considered by a corps of servants who only aim to please.



PROF. FELIX ADLER.

PHOTO BY FALK BROS.

Mrs. Leggett, with the wisdom that marks the thinking woman, grasped the dilemma by the horns as soon as her little girl reached the observing age, and began throwing about her those subtle influences that tend against self-consciousness and self-concentration of a child, whether in the home of affluence or of poverty.

To understand Little France one must know something of her mother. She has been described as a very beautiful woman, tall, well proportioned, with large dark eyes, which, when she talks, have lights as golden as her voice. She speaks with the full deep contralto of the ideal Englishwoman.

In American society she holds a unique position. She fosters art and music, letters and science, and at her social functions one sees more people who are distinctly famous for some worthy accomplishment in fields kindred to these than in any other place in America, not excepting the drawing rooms of other social leaders.

She has been called the brainiest woman in America, probably because she is never found without accurate knowledge upon any subject that comes up for discussion. She is artistic to her finger-tips and everything about her, from her wardrobe to the house in which she lives, reflects her artistic good taste and sense.

Added to all this is a mysterious charm about her personality which draws people to her and makes them her friends for life.

She has been from childhood an omniverous reader, and for this reason is able to meet literary and artistic people upon their own ground, and to their great delight.

A Millionaire Father.

Her husband, Francis H. Leggett, is a millionaire and a prominent member of the Metropolitan and other clubs. He is proud of his wife and little daughter and his greatest delight is found in making them happy.

Mrs. Leggett is as well known in England as in America, and by sheer intellectual merit and personal worth she won her way into the hearts of the most exclusive social sets in London.

When little France came into the world she became heir to wealth, position, unbounded parental love, and a healthful, happy little body that as it grew older became very lovely and full of life and spirit.

THEY DRAW VERY BADLY, HAVE A GREWSOME SENSE OF COLOR AS YET

So beautiful did this little bit of humanity enfold in the unconsciousness of all its blessings that her mother, pondering over the future of a lovely child, dreaded the coming of the hour when she would awaken to the importance of her role in this life, and, fearing that selfishness which is too often the heritage of an only child, she decided the one needful offset to this danger would be the companionship of another child of the same age, to share the benefits and claim the right to live and enjoy and suffer all the small delights and torments of nursery life.

She would borrow somebody else's little one, with wholesome antecedents, to grow up with France. This would harbor that generosity and kindliness so easily and inevitably threatened in the luxurious surroundings of modern children.

Mr. Leggett agreed it was a wise thing to do. So did the English governess, though she admitted it doubled her responsibilities. She, in fact, was the first to see that her delicate, precious charge needed companionship, and pointed out that nothing would so develop the loving nature—rub off the corners and make her feel she was but one of many—in this big world, instead of the only one which she was fast becoming in the household.

"I wanted to find a natural, unaffected child," said Mrs. Leggett in telling the story to a writer for this paper, "and as I believe pedigree counts for less than environment in character-making, we looked for wholesomeness and health primarily.

"A cheery nature, venturesomeness, courage, a strong sense of her own rights and pluck to fight for them were essentials for our purpose.

"We found all these and more in a charming child who having lost her mother a few months before was ripe for kindness.

"We invited her for a visit of two months in the country, and she remained a member of the family and a large part of its sunshine.

A Remarkable Experiment.

"The little girl was seven years old and her name is Florence. She is now eight and France is seven. They have been sisters for a year. We took Florence into our home and hearts and she has been treated from the first exactly as France was.

"There is actually no difference between them. They play with the same toys, study the same lessons, wear the same clothes, think about the same things, say the same prayers at night and sleep side by side in the same sort of little white bed. They receive the same good-night hugs from nurse, governess and mother. They both call me mother.

"The result is that France has retained all her unconscious unselfishness, still has the unbounded enthusiasm of babyhood, is never lonely—and loves Florence with the adoration of a sister.

"The two make the most amusing study.

"In Scotland they learned to ride and are fairly accomplished horsewomen. At Ridgely Manor they know the habits of every horse on the place and their ponies, dogs and cats follow them like a small menagerie.

"I am confident my experiment is proving entirely successful and that all I wished to accomplish in the training of my own child is far more easily accomplished in the training of both of them. Florence is brave, plucky, full of adventure—all of which reacts upon France.

"A week after the arrival my timid child climbed a ladder in the wake of Florence to a haystack twenty feet high, sliding down, with a drop of ten feet. There was some hesitation, any amount of deliberation, and nothing but example in another child could have induced her to such a feat.

"No persuasion could have tempted her into such an adventure. That achievement alone was worth my experiment. France is naturally timid, reserved, formal, self-centered, simple and direct, and yet satisfied, and has a general air of being always quite in the right.

"Florence is the reverse; buoyant, natural, with the gift of friendliness, generous, emotional. They supplement each other in every characteristic. They are as different as night and day and equally lovable.

A Complete Success.

I find it a successful experiment, and wonder every mother does not look about the world for somebody else's child who has the qualities she cannot give her own.

"Florence is a typical American child. They read fairly, give promise of becoming excellent musicians, sew well, and knit always when read to.

"They are not allowed presents of value, and make their own toys. They draw very badly, have a grewsome sense of color as yet. Their real, tangible life is in Fairyland. There exists a sort of almost religious compact between them that life begins only when they are alone and borne upon wings to a region they know.

"They come to me at 5 in the evening

DOGS AND CATS FOLLOWED THEM LIKE A SMALL MENAGERIE

ROBERT MAC DOUGALL PROFESSOR OF PSYCHOLOGY N.Y. UNIVERSITY PHOTO BY FALK BROS.

FRANCE AND FLORENCE WITH THEIR DOLLS.

Photographed especially for this paper at the residence of Mrs. Francis H. Leggett.

"A MOVEMENT IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION."

By ROBERT MacDOUGALL.

Professor of Psychology in New York University.

MY OPINION of Mrs. Leggett's experiment is not a personal one. It applies, instead, to all similar cases. I have been much interested in this act of Mrs. Leggett, because it is a movement in the right direction.

It is a generally accepted theory that children should have the companionship of persons of their own age. There is a decided advantage in a boy having the companionship of boys of his own age. In their play—which to us seems unimportant, but is surely very important to the child—he is taught the value of his own possibilities.

He learns whether he can beat the other boy in a running race. If he loses the race it hurts him, and he does all in his power to win the next time. In that way the playful comrade is a stimulus to him. He learns whether he can talk better than the other boy, and if he cannot he tries at once to improve himself. He learns to judge of his own capabilities correctly as compared to those of other children.

If he were to grow up alone he would have some idea of his own possibilities, but necessarily an incorrect comparative one. He would have compared himself to the grown persons about him, and in this he would learn to undervalue himself.

But having known some other boy very well he would compare himself with that other boy and learn thereby that he had some qualities that were above the average. Also that he had some virtues that were below those of the other boy. And he would try to improve himself so as to outrank the other fellow.

This applies equally to a girl. In having a companion of her own age and sex she is trained mentally and physically. There is something in the action of one mind upon another that is stimulating. Doubtless both girls will improve faster under the conditions put upon them by Mrs. Leggett than they would alone.

I have no hesitancy at all in declaring that the experiment will be a good thing for Mrs. Leggett's daughter.

FRANCE LEGGETT AT HER LESSON

Photographed especially for this paper at the residence of Mrs. Francis H. Leggett.

"MRS. LEGGETT HAS SET A WORTHY EXAMPLE."

By GEORGE W. MEEKS.

Superintendent of Bureau of Dependent Adults.

I THINK that Mrs. Leggett has set a worthy example in adopting this little girl as a companion for her growing daughter. I can think of no fate as sad as that of the wealthy little girl with no brothers and sisters of her own age to play with.

The little princess is obliged by her caste to remain in the house if in the city, or in the immediate companionship of a mature nurse or governess. There is no happy, free play for her, except with persons much older. She grows up with the idea that she is not the mental equal of any one she comes in contact with. Whoever she meets she has the idea pressed home upon her mind that she does not equal them in any one thing.

If she has the companionship of a child of her own age she pits her strength of mind and body against that of her friend, and now and then has the gladdening knowledge that she is the equal of at least one human being in the world. This teaches her responsibility. It teaches her human kindness.

It is said that every one should have at least two real friendships: One the friendship of a person older than himself—this keeps him up to his greatest possibilities; the other, the friendship of a person younger—this keeps him young in heart and in touch with the lost youth that we all look back to with so much longing. In our work as caretakers for the dependent of the great city we are frequently thrown into contact with beautiful children in the homes of the poor; children who have great possibilities; children who, if properly trained and reared would grow up to be credits to the city and nation.